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SUBJECT: STRONG PAST, PRESENT TIES IN THE "CITY OF GENTLE PEOPLE"

11. SUMMARY. The Ambassador underscored the positive effect of dedicated U.S. Government assistance to the province of Negros Oriental in the Philippine's central Visayas region, during a trip to Dumaguete City, the "City of Gentle People." Beginning the visit with a speech to Silliman University students, the Ambassador witnessed the results of over a decade of environmental engagement through USAID's Coastal Resource Management Initiative (CRMI) and the Local Initiatives for Affordable Wastewater Treatment (LINAW) at Dumaguete City's wastewater treatment plant. Finally, at nearby Amlan, the Ambassador received an enthusiastic welcome at one of USAID's rural health units and at a Peace Corps marine sanctuary. This committed USG engagement has allowed the Dumaguete City and Amlan areas to become models of health and environmental management.  
END SUMMARY.

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100 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP  
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12. Speaking before a large crowd of Silliman University students, former Fulbright students, International Visitor Program participants, and American Studies Alumni, the Ambassador noted the long-standing ties between the United States and the university. Originally founded by the U.S. Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church in 1901, Silliman University is the oldest American University in Asia and is among the Philippine's top institutions of higher learning. From 1995-2001, USAID's Coastal Resource Management Initiative enabled Silliman University to become a Center of Excellence in Coastal Resource Management. An additional USAID grant helped the University strengthen nearby marine protected areas. Silliman University also features an American Corner in its library with unique, interactive displays.

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LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO UNIVERSAL PROBLEMS  
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13. A tour of Dumaguete City's public market wastewater treatment plant illustrated the importance of funding clean water programs. As recently as 2003, Dumaguete City's coastal waters contained over 22 times the allowable standard for dangerous bacteria. Under the LINAW program, Dumaguete City built a wastewater treatment facility and inaugurated a city-wide system to clean and treat septic tanks. The treatment facilities are both efficient and environmentally friendly. These are low-cost, low-maintenance, natural treatment systems utilizing minimal electricity and mechanical parts. Wetland areas at the final stage of treatment are already attracting birds and butterflies. Residents told the Ambassador that they are pleased with the results and are proud of their accomplishments in cleaning up their city.

14. Thanks to coastal clean up projects spearheaded by the current resident Peace Corps volunteer and the local mayor, the town of Amlan, near Dumaguete City, ranks as one of the best coastal resource management programs in the Philippines. The Peace Corps also maintains the Tandayag Marine Sanctuary that prevents over-fishing and coastal contamination. With help from the local government, fishermen now recycle plastic bags, producing hand bags

as an additional source of income.

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A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP  
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15. USAID and Amlan's partnership began in 1996 when, with technical assistance, Amlan's Rural Health Unit (RHU) became the first in Negros Oriental to be certified by the Philippine Department of Health for meeting the standards for quality public health. The Ambassador's tour of the RHU brought attention to its twelve years of outstanding service in prenatal, delivery, postpartum, and family planning services in Amlan. PhilHealth, the Philippine national insurance carrier, earmarked substantial funds for Amlan, further improving the RHU's service.

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BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD  
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16. The Ambassador's visit generated positive media attention both regionally and nationally. During stops at a local radio station and during pullaside interviews, the Ambassador noted that in addition to USAID and Peace Corps efforts, the U.S. is helping to increase food security assistance to Negros Oriental. Through partnerships with U.S. businesses, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the purchase of dairy cows, a dairy processing plant, and training to local farmers. In cooperation with the American Soybean Association, USDA is also providing assistance to local soybean farmers to improve production.

KENNEY